

## MUSIC AND MUSICIANS.

WAS MOZART'S LIBETTIEST A JEW?

The "Frankforter Zeitung," of Frankfort-on-the-Main, recently published an essay on Lorenzo Da Ponte, and undertook to combat the statement of Mr. Krebsbach in THE TRIBUNE that Mozart's librettist was of Hebrew origin. The writer in the "Frankforter Zeitung" is Robert Preiss, a critic of excellent repute, but his argument is not a forcible one. He says, in brief, that the statement that Da Ponte was originally a Jew seems to rest only on an allegation of the intrinsically Kelly, and that to establish the statement it is necessary to tell what was the original name of Da Ponte and that of his father. Herr Preiss admits that Da Ponte also fails to mention the names of his parents in his "Memorie" and says nothing about the relationship which Herr Preiss assumes must have existed; because of the identity of their names, between Da Ponte and the Bishop of Ceneda, who educated him. Yet Da Ponte asserts positively that it was his father who persuaded him to study for the priesthood. Finally Herr Preiss draws an argument from Da Ponte's story of his return to his father's house from London on All Soul's Day, when it is the custom in Catholic countries to have family reunions. Da Ponte returned unexpectedly and after describing the joy of the meeting mentions that he slept in one bed with his father, who said a prayer before his crucifix before retiring.

Herr Preiss is entitled to have his points answered, and the task is a simple one. First, Kelly, in his "Reminiscences," makes no positive statement on the subject, but only gives voice to a popular belief. Here are his words: "It was said that originally he was a Jew, turned Christian, dubbed himself an Abbe and became a dramatic writer." These "Reminiscences" did not appear until 1826, when Da Ponte had been over twenty years in America. Now, Mr. Krebsbach furnished ample evidence (though not for the purpose of proving that Da Ponte was of Hebrew origin) that before Da Ponte left England he was engaged in a controversy with an Italian who persistently twitted him with his changes of religious faith. The date of the controversy is fixed by the fact that it took place while Da Ponte was poet to the Royal Theatre. A few extracts from a scurrilous pamphlet directed against Da Ponte and printed in Lisbon will show that Da Ponte was known to have been a Jew in his youth long before Kelly's statement was printed. The title of the anonymous pamphlet is as follows:

"Breve Notizia dell'opera buffa intitolata 'La Scogli dei Mariti o sia della Signora' scritta dal celebre Lorenz Da Ponte, con doppi sonetti in Ebreo, Cristiano, sacerdote, poeta in Italia e in Germania, altrimenti scolare, maritato e sposato in Londa."

In this pamphlet are two satirical sonnets, the second of which has this superscription: "Sonetto II, dedicato al merito indelebile dell'Ebreo Lorenz Da Ponte poeta del teatro Italiano in Londra l'anno 1795. Il quale dopo di essersi convertito al Cristianesimo nella citta di Venezia abbraccia lo stato ecclesiastico, tanto che acquista la dignità del sacerdotio; ma venuto in Inghilterra non volle aver altro. Priviale in desso che quello dell'Impastato, e diede un calco al Domineus vobissem per accrescere il numero degli Iudei che fanno l'Ebra." In the "Placevoli Notizie," published in answer to this pamphlet, to the denial of the oft-repeated statement that Da Ponte was originally a Jew was found: "The authorship of the pamphlet is, however, charged on one Carlo Francesco Ceneda."

Plainly Kelly did not originate the story that Da Ponte was of Hebrew origin. It is much older than his "Reminiscences." The fact that Da Ponte says nothing on the subject is proof of nothing. His autobiography is full of contradictions and blunders. In "The New-York Mirror" of September 23, 1838, Samuel Ward was in Da Ponte's physiologist. Both he and N. W. Pitts, who was one of the editors of "The Mirror" at the time, were old and intimate friends of Da Ponte. Ward speaks with evident knowledge of the fact (which we may safely assume to be true) that Da Ponte was originally a Jew, that he was the son of a leather dealer in Ceneda and was brought up by his father under the Mosiac law till his fourteenth year. He was then placed in the Seminary of St. Peter in Rome, where he remained till his brother. The name of this Bishop was Lorenzo Da Ponte, and it is evident that while one brother adopted the entire name of his benefactor, the other assumed only the name of his father. In 1830, he brought his wife and English Friends to New York, and Da Ponte prepared for colleges. Terms for day pupils from \$60 to \$125.

**THE MUSSES GRINNELL** will reopen their DAY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, 2 East 54th-st., October 3.

**THE NEW-YORK COOKING SCHOOL**, 28 Lafayette Place, classes for young ladies, opens Sept. 24.

**THE BERLITZ SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES** (See advertisement under schools for both sexes).

**THE MISSES GRINNELL** will reopen their DAY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, 2 East 54th-st., October 3.

**THE NEW-YORK CLASICAL SCHOOL**, 578 Madison Avenue, classes for young ladies, opens Sept. 24.

**THE NEW-YORK MUSICAL INSTITUTE**, 233 West 17th-st., N. Y., classes for young ladies, opens Sept. 24.

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